DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 391 169 CS 215 186

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TITLE	Apprenticeship versus Partnership: Graduate Students as Administrators.
PUB DATE	Jan 96
NOTE	4p.
PUB TYPE	Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Journal Articles (080)
JOURNAL CIT	Composition Chronicle: A Newsletter for Writing Teachers; v8 n9 p6-8 Jan 1996
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Administrator Role; Apprenticeships; College Faculty; *English Departments; *Graduate Students; Higher Education; *Professional Development; Teacher Education; *Teaching Assistants; Writing Instruction
IDENTIFIERS	*University of Washington

ABSTRACT

In recent years, traditional teacher training programs for graduate teaching assistants which value a rather narrow definition of academic work have produced a limiting path of professionalization. The problem can no longer be figured as a matter of emphasis--should more training resources be directed toward pedagogy instead of content area scholarship?--but rather as a failure of definition, a misreading of the profession. Graduate students are treated as preprofessionals. It is assumed that they need not (and perhaps cannot and will not) assume full responsibility for teaching or for developing their own pedagogical methods/materials, their own theories of writing and education, nor their own professional sense of place. The English Department at the University of Washington believes that its experience with teaching assistants offers a valuable alternative to the traditional apprenticeship model. At the University of Washington, graduate students have a variety of courses they can teach and a similarly extensive range of administrative roles in which they can participate. For example on the expository writing committee, graduate students, who are elected by their peers, work with faculty committee members in such tasks as selecting textbooks for 100-level composition courses and inviting nationally known scholars in pedagogy to speak on campus. Other opportunities to work as administrators are with the Educational Opportunity Program and the computer-integrated composition program. (TB)

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Apprenticeship versus Partnership: Graduate Students as Administrators

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In recent years, graduate programs in English have devoted considerable resources to the training of graduate teaching assistants. In fact, the situationof a new teacher being thrust into a classroom for the first time with little more than a class list and a copy of the approved text has been reduced to a mythical remnant of our institutional past. However, graduate professional development programs have generally de-emphasized (or ignored) preparation for other faculty roles and responsibilities. A traditional model of training which values a rather narrow definition of academic work has produced a limiting path of professionalization. Trudell Thomas notes that "discussions of the training of graduate students tend to focus solely upon their role as teachers and researchers, while paying virtually no attention to their future responsibilities as administrators" (41).

The problem can no longer be figured as a matter of emphasis (should we direct more training resources to pedagogy instead of content area scholarship?) but rather as a failure of definition, a misreading of the profession and a misplacing of the graduate student within it. This misreading defines graduate students according to an "apprenticeship" model of TA training, a model which assumes that teaching assistants are not only preprofessionals, but that they need not (and perhaps cannot and will not) assume full responsibility for teaching nor for developing their own pedagogical methods/materials, their own theories of writing and education, their own professional sense of place. The model refuses to admit the possibility that graduate students may be capable of directing their own preparation and of participating in the direction of the department.

An apprentice is defined by Webster's as:

1) One who is bound by indentures or by legal agreement to serve another person for a certain time, with a view to learning an art or trade, in consideration of instruction therein, and . . . usually of maintenance by the master.
2) Hence, one who is learning, esp. by practical experience under skilled workers, and often without pay, an art, trade, or calling.
3) One not well-versed in a subject; a novice.

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Although I think we use the term "apprentice" to supplant the connotations of "assistant," that is, as someone additional to a faculty member in a course, this term changes only slightly the false perception of what TAs do. In an MLA study which surveyed 248 M.A. programs and 467 Ph.D. programs, 75% of those reporting use TAs as "teaching apprentices," during their first year of graduate study, and it is reported that the principal responsibility of the majority of TAs is "autonomous classroom teaching" (Bridges). If the majority of TA work is so-called "autonomous teaching," in what ways does the notion of apprenticeship misrepresent TAs? Some argue for the concept of apprenticeship, saying that it approximates the ideal of the reciprocal "mentoring" relationship between a student and his or her dissertation director; however, the perhaps buried assumptions regarding the position of the graduate student are very different.

Apprenticeships lacking in equality

In contrast to the relationship between relative equals implied by mentoring, apprenticeship implies a status/power difference between master and apprentice: the apprentice is bound to serve the master, in this case, the writing program administrator or, more broadly, the course curriculum that is given him/her. The learning is uni-directional, determined solely by the master. While the apprentice learns through practical experience, he or she is "under" those who are (we hope) skilled, whereas the apprentice him- or herself is a "novice," unknowledgeable. In this view, graduate student TAs are figured as *recipients* of training. Donavan, Sprouse and Williams summarize the situation:

> Typically, something is handed down to [TAs], whether a book or outline, or the latest theory, writing assignment, classroom exercise, or method of grading. To be sure, most TAs are grateful for whatever help they can get; beginners, after all, must have some security and direction. But the departmental program, whatever it may be, will not, and cannot, consistently serve all their needs—or those of their students—as many TAs learn very quickly. (140)

And what of those graduate students who are not "beginners?" The apprenticeship model reduces all graduate students to the level of novice, regardless of previous teaching or administrative experience. In doing so, it not only places graduate students in the paradoxical and uncomfortable position of implementing the methods and goals of a program without being extended the opportunity to take part in shaping these goals and methods, but it also stunts their professional growth (and, by extension, that of the profession) by eliminating the need for students to define a theory of pedagogy and a professional "location" for themselves. Likewise, by constructing "training" (a term we find inappropriate anyway) to mean the handing down of tips and assignments, graduate preparation obscures the range of intellectual activity involved in being a faculty member—the useful, imaginative, important actions implied by the terms "colleague," "administration," and "academic service." In fact, as we know, for teaching assistants the current system de-emphasizes, even penalizes, doing what faculty do at most colleges and universities: classroom teaching, service work,

and administrative duties. Just as a view of graduate students as apprentices reduces them all to novice teachers, such a view negates the contributions that experienced graduate students can make (and the importance of what they would learn about the workings of the university) by making decisions collaboratively, negotiating departmental policies and politics, participating in cross-disciplinary conversations and understanding the constraints imposed from without, advising/mentoring students, creating curricula and rationalizing program requirements, and so on.

Graduate students need to experience the ways these activities collide with research and teaching. The current-traditional apprenticeship model does little to prepare students for the multiple roles and varied intellectual work of faculty members. As Nicholas Bromell asks in a recent article, "Who, as a graduate student, was encouraged to think seriously about teaching as about scholarship? . . . Who was taught anything at all [and who was provided opportunities to participate in] administration, management, scheduling, curricular reform, and the host of other tasks that make up the dailiness of departmental life and work" (109)? Our answer is that we have now done all of this.

Graduate students as administrators

If "apprenticeship" is seriously flawed as a model of professional development, offering little to teaching assistants themselves and to the profession of which they are already an important, if often under-acknowledged, part, we believe our experience as graduate administrators at the University of Washington offers a significant alternative. The difference lies in a departmental structure which provides a wide variety of opportunities to prepare for the profession of English studies, with the full range of rights and obligations that comprise membership in the professoriate. Such a structure is an important reconfiguration of the dominant paradigm and one that should help us reconceive the membership status of the graduate student as departmental colleague.

At the University of Washington, graduate students in the M.F.A., M.A., and Ph.D. programs are eligible for teaching assistantships between their 1st and 5th years, although occasionally some support is offered after the 5th year. Given the size of the program, it must be admitted that teaching assistantships are extremely competitive and that only an abysmal 42% of graduate students were funded last year. However, although it is relatively unusual for someone to be fully funded throughout his/her entire five years in the program, efforts have increasingly been made to insure that everyone leaves the program with at least a year of classroom experience.

Graduate students at UW teach 100- and 200-level composition courses as well as 200-level introductory literature courses, ultimately staffing about 90 courses per quarter. In the first year of teaching, graduate students teach English 131, a freshman-level course centered on argumentative writing. They are required to attend a two-week intensive orientation before the quarter begins and then to take a quarter-long course on pedagogy. English 131 has a suggested curriculum and the Expository Writing Office provides TAs with extensive course materials, but TAs are free to make changes as they see fit as long as these stay within the parameters of program goals. Indeed, even in the first quarter, TAs are expected to devise their own syllabi and course calendars and thereafter to be solely responsible for every aspect of the courses to which they are assigned.

If graduate students have a wide variety of courses they can teach at UW, they have a similarly extensive range of administrative roles they can participate in—ones that reflect the broad scope of academic work in general (see chart). For example, on the Expository Writing Committee, graduate students, who are elected by their peers, work with faculty committee members in such tasks as selecting textbooks for 100-level courses and inviting nationally known scholars in pedagogy to speak on campus. Similarly, the Writing Center, though headed by a faculty member, has most of its day-to-day operations under the management of a graduate student assistant director, who additionally assists in the training and

University of Washington
Department of English
Writing Program Administration Structure

Director, Expository Writing Program

Associate Director, Expository Writing Program

Assistant Director, Expository Writing Program (3 positions)	Assistant Director, Computer Integrated Writing Program (2 positions)	Assistant Director, Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) (1 position)

Other Sites of Graduate Student Responsibility

Expository Writing Committee 3 Faculty Members 3 Graduate Student Members	Writing Center Assistant Director	Undergraduate Advising Center 2 Graduate Student Advisors

supervision of the tutors. Finally, two graduate students are selected each year to work in the English Undergraduate Advising Center. Here, they not only advise students about course choices but help with a variety of other things from internship applications to graduate school statements of purpose.

Within the formal structure of the Expository Writing Office, assistant directors play a vital and an extremely active role in the administration of the programs that it contains. ADs are competitively chosen each year to fill positions which come open on a rotating basis. Terms for ADs are 2 years, during which time their teaching load is reduced to accommodate their administrative duties.

Directing EOP: Grad administrator with autonomy

Of all these positions, the Educational Opportunity Program AD has perhaps the most autonomy. Advised by the EOP faculty advisor and the director of the writing program, the EOP AD is the department's primary administrator for English 104 and 105, a two-quarter linked writing course for special admission students. The EOP AD also designs curriculum, provides training to instructors, schedules classes, and acts as primary liaison with a number of programs under the Office of Minority Affairs.

The assistant directors of the computer-integrated composition program (or CIC) are largely responsible for what that program has become today—from the physical set-up of our local area network to the types of software that have been chosen, it is a model of pedagogical thoughtfulness. The duties of the CIC ADs center primarily on the orientation, training and support of instructors teaching in the program, both pedagogically and technologically. They assist the associate director of the expository writing program (who is also the director of CIC) in textbook and software testing and provide technical assistance to instructors in the classroom.

Finally, the assistant directors with perhaps the largest range of influence are the three assistant directors of the Expository Writing Program (the job that the we have held). In this position, the EWP ADs are the first to train every graduate student who teaches in the department—before they move on to more training in EOP, CIC, or other academic units. Our duties are myriad—and in fact, in the past 3 years, we, along with our colleagues, have increased the level of responsibility which this position entails. Yet, although the duties have increased, so have the rewards. These positions have given each of us the opportunity to develop experiential competencies and imaginative capabilities. Working as colleagues with both the WPA and each other, we plan and conduct the two-week intensive orientation session and assist in the quarter-long fall course, English 567: Practicum on Teaching. In Fall Quarter as well, we visit each new TA's class at least once and discuss individual classroom concerns with him/her. We also conference with TAs on a number of issues, including grading. Throughout the rest of the year, we continue to provide ongoing support to new teachers by conducting workshops, organizing roundtable discussions, mentoring, and the like.

At the same time, a great deal of our work is devoted to curricular development and revision. Not only do we teach the material we give first year TAs, the EWP ADs collaboratively write and produce the overwhelming majority of material for English 131 in the form of 2 manuals: a course planner and a reference manual. The course planner includes assignments, microschedules, extensive teaching notes, all necessary supplementary teaching materials, and sample papers. Because the experience of 1st year TAs can range from no teaching background to a substantial one, the planner is intended to function as everything from a critical lifeline to classroom confidence to a series of suggestions of what has worked well in the past. The reference manual is just that: it contains course and program policies, departmental and campus resources, classroom suggestions, and selected essays in composition and rhetoric.

In fact, the example of the manuals is an excellent place to begin our consideration of the benefits of reconfiguring the dominant paradigm and allowing graduate students greater participation in administrative positions. Let us end with one example: when Jennifer began teaching in the department in the fall of 1990, she was given a short packet of material one week before beginning each new assignment throughout the quarter. And ADs' Fall quarter was devoted to little else but the frantic production of these packets. Among teaching assistants, the complaints about this system were legion. After one year as an AD producing packets, she decided, along with Marcy and our colleague Mark Long (who were about to begin their first years as ADs), to produce a manual instead and devote our training time to exactly that: training. What was especially exciting about this development was it began a dialogue not only between ADs and the WPA, but between the writing program and its TAs. Thus, last year, while TAs felt that the manual was helpful, they also found it a bit unwieldy—and so one manual became two. We introduced other innovations as well—we wanted to provide easy access to teaching materials and so both training manuals were put on-line; TAs asked for more direct teaching feedback and so we introduced videotaping during orientation. In each of these cases, peer administrators were able to effect change both because they were closer to the needs of teachers within the program, and because the program itself was willing to give them a place within it to use all their competencies. Not only do we believe this has made our program stronger, but it has modeled the possibility of a dynamic form of administrative responsiveness between peers, which, as this generation of scholars moves into the profession, can only make the profession better as a whole.

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Jennifer L. Holberg and Marcy Taylor are Ph.D. candidates at the University of Washington where they are currently completing their dissertations. Jennifer is a Victorianist whose work centers on domesticity and women writers; Marcy is a composition/rhetoric specialist interested in ethnographies of literacy. They served together as Assistant Directors of the Expository Writing Program at UW and continue to colloboratively explore issues of graduate preparation.